



## News From Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis 32<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District of California

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### STATEMENT OF CONGRESSWOMAN HILDA L. SOLIS

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**-Today, Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis (CA-32), Ranking Member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials, released the following statement during a hearing on the Administration's Clear Skies Initiative:

"Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today. I am very concerned about the issue of clean air and public health.

"More than 159 million people live in areas that do not meet attainment for ozone standards – many of these are minority populations. In fact, more than 70 percent of Latinos and African Americans live in counties that have dirty air. 5.5 million Latinos live within 10 miles of a coal fired power plant and 68 percent of all African Americans in the U.S. live within 30 miles of a coal fired power plant, the distance within which the health impacts are most acute.

"Latino children have asthma at more than two and one half times that of non-Latino white children, and death rates from asthma among African Americans is 2.5 times higher than for Whites. Nationwide, African Americans are rushed to the emergency room with asthma attacks three times more often than whites.

"If implemented and enforced, the existing Clean Air Act could help remedy these problems. But rather than fully implement and enforce existing law, the Bush Administration is pushing forward with perhaps one of the biggest gifts yet to corporate polluters – Clear Skies.

"In the 1990 Clear Air Act amendments, risk-based processes were implemented to regulate air toxics. One such toxic emitter is industrial boilers, like those used at refineries, chemical plants and manufacturing facilities, which emit hydrogen chloride, manganese, lead, arsenic and mercury. Clear Skies, as proposed by President Bush, would exempt industrial boilers from existing standards on all of these toxic emissions if the facility chooses to accept weak regulations on nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, and mercury. Clear Skies weakens regulations and in situations like this ignores release of toxic emissions like lead and arsenic.

"As a result of President Bush's proposal, there will likely be 14,000 more lost days of work and 175 more cases of bronchitis in Los Angeles County, 574 more heart attacks in Cook County, Illinois, and 160 more people suffering from asthma in Franklin County, OH. Clear Skies should really be called "Dirty Skies" because it weakens existing law, worsens our air quality and harms public health.

"I urge my colleagues to take this issue very seriously. The potential damaging impacts of Clear Skies is one that will not be felt by us, but by future generations. It is our responsibility to provide them with air that is clean and an environment they will thrive in – not an environment given away to corporate polluters."

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